

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A specimen sensing apparatus comprising:
a specimen container which is vertically
positioned by a container holder of a columnar rack
5 type and conveyed by a belt conveyor;

an infrared CCD camera configured to pick up
an infrared image of the specimen container;

a visible image converter which converts the
infrared image picked up by the infrared CCD camera
10 into a visible image;

an image signal processing unit which processes
and converts one of the infrared image and the visible
image into a signal that is suitable to measure
a specimen amount; and

15 a specimen amount measuring unit which measures an
amount of specimen contained in the specimen container
in response to the signal processed by the image signal
processing unit.

2. The specimen sensing apparatus according to
20 claim 1, further comprising control means for starting
to operate the infrared CCD camera when the specimen
container comes in front of the camera and stopping
operating the camera when the specimen amount measuring
unit sends a measured signal.